

Who tells your story?

I was born in Cairo, Egypt. I have seven siblings and a mom and dad. My family is something that I love a lot. I care for them greatly. Something I think that stands out from family is that we're all different, even though we are blood-related. Our parents are what I would describe as hardworking, loving, and resilient. They pay for our whole family and show hard-working skills. They work multiple jobs so they can take care of us. They wanted a better life for us so they took us to America and managed to live here and raise us for 20+ years despite being refugees and struggling with money. They made it look like you could do anything if you put the time and effort into it. I think that really shows the power of parents with only the thought to make a better life for their children. My younger siblings are all very energetic and loud, but I have learned to deal with them. One of my favorite things to do with my family is to go on vacation with them because it was a lot of fun and we met some family in Kansas for a vacation. Another thing I like to do is to wrestle with my little brothers, but sometimes it's a little too easy to beat them.

If you went to Cairo you would see a lot of kids playing and running around barefoot playing soccer with random things. They would use stuffed animals or play hide and seek near the trees or tag. I'd hear Mom cooking in the kitchen because she was making food for us when she was about to leave. It feels like a cold windy breeze in the air and that feel on the grass which was kinda rough but nice nonetheless. By that time it was second nature to me to just walk on grass barefoot and just run around and play games with my

friends. My favorite memory is when I got to open my Christmas presents for the first time and I got to see all these things that I never thought I would get, and yet they were right there along with the glowing Christmas tree and Christmas dinner. My favorite thing about Cairo is that there was so much diversity in the culture and that there was so much to see. One of my favorite things to see there was the Giza Pyramids Complex, which has one of the Seven Wonders of the World, called the Great Pyramid of King Khufu. I loved going there because I felt like it had a lot to offer and it fueled my imagination.



My parents decided to leave for America in the first place because they wanted a better life and to get a better education for their kids. When I was going to move to America my initial thought was that I was flipping the page to a new chapter in my life. When I came to America I was worried that something could happen. If I took one wrong step I wasn't sure I could survive here. So I knew I had to make friends if I wanted to live happily here. When I started coming to school I felt a lot safer, and I felt the teachers cared about me. I was

bound to make enemies on the way because not everyone was perfect, and that's something I had to accept on my journey in America.

Some problems I faced in America were struggling to fit in because it was hard to be "the only one" in most classes, or people giving me a dirty look because of who I was. But I didn't let that bring me down. I was able to make friends who helped me on the journey one step at a time, and I felt like there was nothing we couldn't do together.



America did not meet my expectations because I thought everyone was welcoming, but they changed as soon as we went to school. Then some people didn't like me as much and didn't respect me. The way my perspective changed is that I realized you have to work hard to get what you want because sometimes just being you is a handicap in a way. Not everyone likes you, and that's okay because people see things differently than others do.

Some success I'm proud of in America is being able to make friends, even though I was so new to this place. Another one is that I was able to make it through middle and high school. Something I

miss about my home is my old friends because we had been through so much and I hated leaving them. But I also think it was for the best because we have to take on a new life with harder challenges. I have taken God with me all my life because he's helped me stay in the right lane and go in the right direction, so I don't stray away from him. He also helped me smile and keep pushing forward no matter what.

When I go for a walk in the morning, something I think about in my day-to-day life that makes me smile is talking to my friends and laughing with them. I also start to think sometimes, "What would've happened if I didn't come here? Would I have gotten so many opportunities in a lifetime? Would I be the same person?" Even though I don't know, all I know is that I have to take one step at a time just to reach the finish line because I still have time. So I just keep walking one step at a time and smile because I don't have to win, just make it.

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